

## Louisiana Black Bear     *Ursus americanus luteolus*

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**STATUS:** Threatened (57 FR 588-January 7, 1992); proposed critical habitat; (58 FR 63560-December 2, 1993).

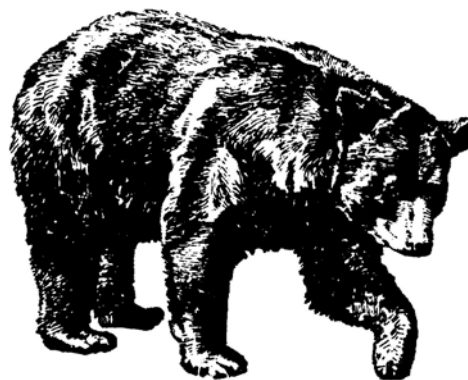
**DESCRIPTION:** Medium-sized bear (4.5-6.5 ft. total length, adult male may weigh 300-400 pounds); long, black hair with cinnamon and brown color phases; individuals may have a white patch on lower throat and chest; broad muzzle is yellowish-brown; tail is short, black, and well-haired; face is typically blunt; each foot has short, curved claws.

**HABITAT:** Found in woodlands and forests, usually near water (rivers, streams, bayous). Bottomland hardwood and floodplain forests are utilized extensively, although upland hardwood forest, mixed pine/hardwood forest, wetlands, and agricultural fields may also be used. For denning, bears often use bald cypress and tupelo (black tupelo and water tupelo) trees with visible cavities, having a minimum diameter at breast height of 36 inches, and occurring in or along rivers, lakes, streams, bayous, sloughs, and other water bodies.

### DISTRIBUTION:

**Present:** Populations are concentrated in Louisiana, with occasional sightings in east Texas.

**Historic:** Louisiana, Southern Mississippi, Arkansas, and eastern Texas. Its current range in Louisiana now appears to be limited to the Tensas and Atchafalaya River basins. No extant populations are currently known to occur in Texas, but recent sightings have been reported from some eastern counties. (Sightings can be reported to the Fish and Wildlife Service [281] 286-8282 or Texas Parks and Wildlife Department [512] 389-4771).



**THREATS AND REASONS FOR DECLINE:** Modification and reduction of bottomland habitat; illegal killing is probable.

**OTHER INFORMATION:** Mating occurs in June and July with cubs born in January or February. This subspecies is not a true hibernator, but exhibits inactive periods of 2-4 days at a time. Although classified as carnivores, bears are not active predators. Berries and acorns are typical food sources, but agricultural products (such as corn, wheat, and sugarcane) may also be taken. Bears are considered to be intelligent animals, but shy and secretive, usually trying hard to avoid contact with humans. Cubs (usually 1 to 3) are generally born every other year, remain with the mother the first year, and then strike out to establish new territories during their second summer. The young are vulnerable to threats and juvenile mortality can be high. In an effort to recover the Louisiana black bear, a unique coalition of landowners, state and federal agencies, private conservation groups, forest industries, and agricultural interests has formed the Black Bear Conservation Committee (BBCC), which is supporting educational and research efforts for the bear, and developing management guidelines and restoration plan. (The BBCC can be contacted at P.O. Box 4125, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821.) Other free-roaming bears of *Ursus americanus* species found within the Louisiana black bear's historic range (Louisiana, southern Mississippi, and eastern Texas) are designated as threatened due to similarity of appearance. A special rule allows for normal forest management activities to occur within the bear's range, except for activities causing damage to or loss of den trees, den tree sites, or candidate den trees.

### REFERENCES:

- Black Bear Conservation Committee. 1992. Black bear management handbook for Louisiana, Mississippi, and east Texas.
- Davis, William B. 1978. The Mammals of Texas. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Austin.
- Nowak, R.M. 1986. Status of the Louisiana bear. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service special report, 17pp.
- Schmidly, D.J. 1983. Texas mammals east of the Balcones fault zone. Texas A&M Press, College Station, TX.

REV. DATE 6/95